

Ask the Right Questions: Who, What, When and Where

Know where your teen is when he or she is away from home. Have your kids check in with you regularly. Give them coins, a phone card or mobile phone with clear usage rules. (For example, “When I leave you a voicemail, I expect a call back within five minutes.”) If a beeper or cell phone is not allowed to be used in school, have your child keep one in his backpack and ask him to turn it on after school. You may have to coordinate the use of beepers and cell phones with school administrators. If your teen does not have a beeper or cell phone, get numbers of where he’ll be after school so that you can check in or have him call you at certain times so he can check in with you.

- **Make a list of her activities** for the coming day and put it on the fridge, on a calendar or in your wallet or pocketbook.
- **Walk through your neighborhood** and note where kids your child’s age hang out.
- **Know your teen’s friends.** Have a small party at your house and invite the parents of his friends. Have his friends stay for dinner. Ask them about their parents. Make a point of meeting your teen’s friends’ parents — find them at a school event or PTA meeting, soccer practice, dance rehearsal or wherever the kids hang out.
- **Work with other parents** to get a list of everyone’s addresses, e-mails, and phone numbers so you can keep in touch with your teen.
- **Show up a little early** to pick up your teen so you can observe her behavior.
- **Occasionally check to see that your teen is where he says he’s going to be.**
- **Lots of teenagers get in trouble with drugs right after school — from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.** Try to be with your kids then, but if you can’t, make sure your child is doing something positive with an adult around: Sports, jobs, clubs, after-school programs or religious youth groups. If your kids have to be home, make sure they are doing homework or chores and not hanging out with friends.